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New legislation will combat invasive plant species

LANSING – Michigan would be better protected against invasive plant species like Eurasian milfoil and hydrilla under legislation introduced today in the Michigan Senate, Sen. Patty Birkholz, R-Saugatuck Township, announced.

“Michigan’s water is being threatened by foreign plants that crowd out and kill native vegetation, harming the natural ecosystem,” Birkholz said. “This legislation will help protect our waters and natural habitats to keep them clean and usable for future generations.”

The bipartisan legislative package would:

- Identify prohibited insects and aquatic plant species;
- Prohibit the release and introduction of certain insects and aquatic plant species;
- Amend the Natural Resources and Protection Act to recognize the existence of and prohibit genetically engineered or non-native aquatic plants;
- Require the Department of Natural Resources to post requirements and penalties on their website; and
- Establish a Non-native Species Advisory Council and specify duties of the council.

The Advisory Council would establish criteria for identifying infested waterways and make recommendations regarding the state’s efforts to eradicate invasive species. The council also would report annually to the Legislature with recommendations for additions to the lists of invasive species and infested waterways.

This legislation is similar to prohibitions put in place last year to protect Michigan’s waterways from invasion by non-native fish species.

The Great Lakes Conservation Task Force Report, issued in 2002, made broad recommendations for important steps that the state should take to protect our water quality. One of the most important recommendations was to implement laws that will guard against further invasion of both non native fish and plants.

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